

## **VA Bed Closures Have Little Impact on Incarceration of Veterans with Mental Illness**

MIRECC health services director, Robert Rosenheck, M.D., has completed the first study that looks at whether closing inpatient beds leads to increased incarceration among veterans with mental illness. The study was in response to concern that people with mental illness are being shifted into the criminal justice system as a consequence of reductions in the number of public mental hospital beds and insufficient community mental health services. Along with co-authors Steven Banks, Ph.D., John Pandini, Ph.D. and Rani Hoff, Ph.D., Rosenheck tracked the incarceration rates in veterans and non-veterans in Upstate New York during 1994-1997 when 33% of inpatient mental health beds were closed. They found that incarceration among VA mental health patients was less likely than among those in general hospitals or state hospitals. Most importantly, incarceration rates did not go up as VA beds closed during the three-year period.